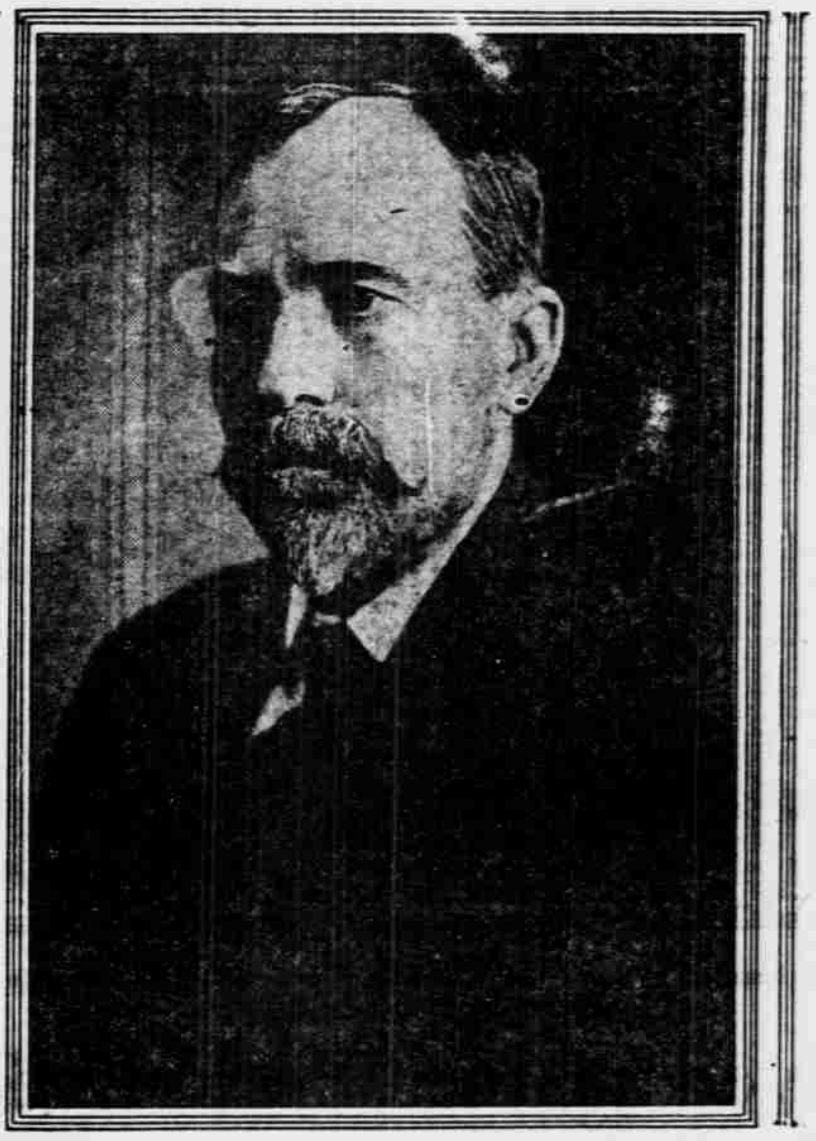
Waacs, V. A. D.'s, &c.

THE extent to which riding a hobby to the extreme can spoil an otherwise good job is perfectly illustrated in *The Sword of Deborah*, by F. Tennyson Jesse. This woman writer was given a commission to go to France and Belgium during the war and make a study of what the women's organizations, such as the Volunteer Aid Detachment (generally known as the V. A. D.'s) and the Woman's Auxiliary Army Corps (in popular parlance the Waacs) were doing at the front and behind the lines. Now Mrs. Jesse possesses a particular aversion to communal life, and since it is thus that practically all of the young women who belonged to these organizations lived, Mrs. Jesse waxes impatient over such conditions to a tiresome degree.

So much has been written about the V. A. D.'s and the Waacs that Mrs. Jesse tells us little that is new except details of their life, such as the purely feminine fashion in which they decorated their offices and rooms. The descriptions are of the woman's magazine order and much more attention is paid to these matters than to the service work this legion of women performed and made good in as a part of the British forces in the field. Possibly she did not mean to, but her book leaves the impression of a snobbish kind of condescension toward these gallant and hard working young women who, in the words of one admiring male officer "had their great adventure."

THE SWORD OF DEBORAH. By F. Tennyson Jesse. George H. Doran Company.



Dr. James H. Hyslop, author of "Contact With the Other Worlds."

A Cryptic Seven

IN order to understand the play you must first read the preface; then if you fail to make out what the play is about you may return to the preface. We refer to *The Seven Who Slept*, a philosophic dialogue (so we term it) by A. Kingsley Porter. It is a preface with a play; we cannot determine, however, which was written for the sake of which, though we shrewdly suspect that the writer could not crowd his thoughts into either to his entire satisfaction. Hence our own uneasiness.

There is something in it all. The author is presumably trying to demonstrate that lies or illusions are the basis, the necessary basis, of our existence. Still, as we lay down the book, we are little wiser than when we cut the pages.

Mr. Kingsley Porter writes a pure and fastidious if somewhat mannered English, and he would have done better to complete his preface and then stop. The play serves only to confuse.

THE SEVEN WHO SLEPT. By A. Kingsley Porter. Boston: Marshall Jones Company.

An experienced British publicist, Edwin Pugh, is writing the life of H. G. Wells, and Chesterton is going to run it serially in *The New Witness*. Wishing Mr. Pugh all success, one hopes that Bernard Shaw also will undertake a life of Wells. Mr. Wells can then do Mr. Chesterton's life, and a highly pyrotechnical sort of pinwheel will be complete. (Key to this casket: Chesterton once wrote Shaw's.)

The *Forum* is offering cash prizes for fiction and other forms of writing illuminating the present Mexican situation.

A Capital College History of Modern Europe

THE armistice which went into effect at 11 o'clock on the morning of November 11, 1918, rounded out a half century of surpassing interest in the history of the world.

It had witnessed the rise and fall of the modern German Empire. It illustrated the malevolent power of education, when perverted for evil purposes, in convincing the heart and intellect of a great people that might should be regarded as the sole standard and test of right. Most of all, let us hope, it doomed forever the aspirations of autocratic militarism to dominate mankind.

Naturally the history of such a period presents a world wide appeal. Everybody—those whom we are accustomed to typify by such phrases as The Man in the Street, The Man at the Club Window and the omnipresent and omnivorous General Reader—wants to know something about the events that led up to the cataclysm of the downfall of Germany. A consciousness of ignorance on these subjects has become intolerable and so it is that such a book as *Fifty Years of Europe* by Prof. Charles Downer Hazen of Columbia University, philosophically conceived and admirably executed, is sure of a wide welcome, once its scope and character are generally understood.

A professor of history in a great university owes it to his position to contribute something, if he can, to the mass of the world's information in his particular branch of study. Prof. Hazen has well fulfilled this obligation on his part. A manual of history, like a condensed novel, is usually the dullest of books. This volume of 400 pages is not longer than most such manuals, but any one who passed it by with the idea that it was equally dry would make an unfortunate mistake. It abounds with interest throughout.

The story of the nations reads like "a tale that is told," yet accuracy is not sacrificed in order to make the narrative attractive. Indeed, it would be difficult to name any American writer who excels Prof. Hazen in the power of condensation without diminution of interest. The manifestation of this power in the present work makes it unique.

II.

In order to form a background essential to an appreciation of the events of the last fifty years the author is obliged to sketch a considerable period antecedent to 1870, which was "a year of culmination and fruition, the end of one period, the beginning of another." Not only did the war of 1870 create the German Empire: "It completed also the unification of Italy by giving to the Kingdom as its capital the incomparable city of Rome. It overthrew the Second Empire in France and produced the Third Republic. It robbed France of Alsace-Lorraine for the benefit of Germany and thus embedded militarism in the life of Europe.

The eight pages of the first chapter in which Prof. Hazen describes the unification of Italy aptly illustrate the rare quality which we have attributed to him as a writer of condensed history. As a rule only special students appreciate the respective parts played by Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi in making Italy free from the Alps to the Adriatic, from Spartivent to Capo Fino. Prof. Hazen shows in a few words how their specific differences in temperament and their opposing views concerning the best means to be adopted all led in the end to the accomplishment of the great purpose to which their lives were devoted.

In the following paragraph the author presents a striking picture of Italy a century ago:

"There was then no Italian nation, but there existed within the peninsula ten small and entirely separate States, among which the most important were the Kingdom of Piedmont or Sardinia, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Papal States, the Kingdom of Naples, and the two rich provinces in the north, Lombardy and Venetia, which belonged to Austria. There was no form of political union among these States, not even that of a loose confederation as in the case of Germany. Consequently, there was no Italian flag, no Italian reigning house, no Italian citizenship, no Italian army. Out of this jumble of petty independent States arose in the great decade between 1859 and 1870 the present unified Kingdom of Italy."

The moral aid that England rendered to Italy in gaining her freedom is often overlooked. Mazzini felt that the Austrians must be driven out of the peninsula; Cavour agreed, but realized that this could only be done with foreign assistance, which he obtained from Napoleon III. in the campaign that ended with the defeat of the Austrians at Solferino. The resulting treaty, however, did not give the Italians all that they desired. It gave them Lombardy, but attempted to restore to Austria the Dutchies of Tuscany and Modena, whose people had revolted against the Austrian rule. Lord Palmerston would not sanction this. "The people of the duchies," he said, "have as much right to change their sovereigns as the English people or the French or the Belgian or the Swedish. The annexation of the duchies to Piedmont will be an unfathomable good to Italy." It would be difficult to point out a bolder stroke for freedom in any of the utterances of Mr. Gladstone; and Palmerston's prediction proved true. The duchies were annexed to Piedmont in March, 1860, and a small State of less than five millions of people had grown to a Kingdom of eleven millions in a single year. "This was the most important change in the political system of Europe since 1815."

III.

Dealing similarly with the other States of Europe Prof. Hazen sketches successively their development from 1870 to the outbreak of the great war in 1914. The final chapter, which takes up a quarter of the book, is devoted to the world war itself. We doubt whether a better narrative of the great struggle can be found in so short a space anywhere else. The author's point of view is indicated by his declaration that in the earlier years of the war the leaders of France and England and the nations they represented were really defending the new world as well as the old against the threats and endeavors of German aggression; and he felt that "in such a contest the United States belonged body and soul."

From August, 1914, to April, 1917, he truly says that America passed through a painful, humiliating and dangerous experience. It is pleasant to recall, however, that all through this trying period such men as Theodore Roosevelt and Leonard Wood endeavored to arouse the country to a sense of its duty and the dire necessity of preparing to resist the German foe.

In examining this book we have been unable to recall any event of consequence in the history of Europe since 1870 of which there is not some record or mention in its pages. Much information of interest and importance not readily obtainable elsewhere is contained in the chapter devoted to the smaller European States. Nor are the Colonial possessions of the great Powers neglected. How many persons know, we wonder, that "at the opening of the twentieth century the Colonial Empire of France is eleven times larger than France itself"—?

Fifty Years of Europe is a capital book that does honor to the university with which its author is connected.

FIFTY YEARS OF EUROPE: 1870-1919. By Charles Downer Hazen. Henry Holt & Co.

ONE of the favorite indoor sports of English writers and legal men of a literary turn of mind is working out solutions of Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Along comes Sir Harry Johnston and tells us, in *The Gay Dombeys*, what happened to several characters in *Dombey and Son;* and now John Ayscough relates through the medium of the hero of his second autobiographical novel *Fernando*, that when he was a lad he retold some of Dickens's stories in order to have them come out according to his own ideas.

Thus we read: "Fernando made Paul Dombey recover and marry Cordelia Blimber, spectacles and all; and Mr. Toots did also marry Florence, though he expired, quite painlessly, a few weeks before Walter's return from being drowned—'drown-ded' as Captain Cuttle put it. I'm afraid he took the appalling liberty of making Ralph Nickleby repent and lead Miss La Creevey to the altar—which she undoubtedly would have repented. And David Copperfield's mother never married Mr. Murdstone (which naturally saved David much misery) but found a more congenial partner in Mr. Dick—Miss Trotwood, espousing Agnes's father, was not in the least jealous."